

MULTI-FAMILY DESIGN STANDARDS

Issues & Opportunities Summary

Urban Design & Planning – Comprehensive Planning

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Prepared by Lauren McGuire, Senior Planner, RLA

Introduction

The desire for quality multi-family development was prioritized as part of the City's 2009 Council Work Plan. The project will evaluate the current Code and develop the necessary Development Code regulations to help facilitate the development of attractive, innovative, high quality multi-family housing.

The proposed multi-family Code amendments will ensure that:

- Residential lands are developed in a way that meets the community's vision and the City's goals.
- Gresham's Development Plan contains urban design provisions that promote the livability of multi-family residential developments.
- Principles and Guidelines are created, and Design Standards are updated that:
 - Identify elements that constitute good site and building design;
 - Create a sense of place for Gresham;
 - Allow a two-track review process by the Design Commission;
 - Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles where feasible; and
 - Educate the development and residential community with regard to the implementation of excellent multi-family design.

Issues

The following are summaries of issues that have been identified through various public processes such as a multi-family development tour, two Design Charrette events, Design Commission meetings, the "Picturing the Future" Visual Preference Survey and City staff review of the Development Code. Each issue description includes an issue summary and a listing of the relevant Code section or sections.

I. Multi-Family Design Vision

Issue Summary:

The City has not clearly defined its desired vision for well designed multi-family development. Some people have expressed concern that the new multi-family development being built is not consistently attractive, high quality, innovative, or compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Public comments from the Multi-Family Design Charrette and the Design Commission meetings include:

- The City's goal should be to become a community that embraces excellent design.
- The City should promote high quality multi-family design as this type of residential development is a very visible component of the physical Gresham community.
- The essential elements of good site and architectural design should be identified and should reflect the City's values and goals.
- The multi-family development should reflect the City's commitment to sustainable practices and technologies.
- A design principle should address the transition from public to private space.
- The site layouts for multi-family developments should promote multi-modal transportation activity.
- The City should incorporate safety and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards into multi-family design.
- The architectural character of Gresham is not based on historical precedents and therefore future design regulations should not be constrained by historical styles.
- The architectural character should somehow reflect the City's proximity to recreation attractors such as the Columbia River Gorge and Mt. Hood.
- The design vision should establish a sense of place for Gresham.

Volume 2: Policies of the Gresham Community Development Plan (GCDP) does not provide a clear vision for multi-family development. There are some relevant housing Goals, Policies and Action Measures in Chapter 10.600 that begin to identify desires for multi-family housing as noted below.

City Goals, Policies and Action Measures

Goal

The City's Housing Goal in the 10.600 Housing section is: *"Ensure adequate quality housing for existing and future Gresham residents."*

Policies

The following City Policies support the City's housing goal and are relevant to this project:

- *The City shall protect and enhance the quality and integrity of its residential neighborhoods.*
- *The City shall designate adequate lands, and make available land use processes to provide opportunities to develop a variety of housing types in locations and at densities consistent with its goals.*
- *The City shall promote housing development and design innovation and quality through methods such as planned residential development and master planning standards.*

- *The City shall require multi-family and other attached housing development to conform to community design and development standards.*
- *The City shall provide for high- and medium-density housing in areas such as Centers and Corridors, where public and private services and economic activity necessary to support higher population densities, are either present or planned for in the future. Public and private services and activities include but are not limited to transportation, employment, commercial services, entertainment, and recreation.*
- *The City shall ensure that residential densities are appropriately related to locational characteristics and site conditions, including existing land use patterns, topography, transportation and public facilities, natural hazards and natural resources.*
- *The City shall require measures to mitigate adverse impacts from differing adjacent land uses (noise, traffic, visual aesthetics and glare from outdoor lighting, etc.) on residents of new residential development. The City shall require measures to mitigate negative impacts of more intense residential projects on less dense neighborhoods and established residential development through means such as:*
 - *Orderly transitions from one residential density to another such as lot-size compatibility standards,*
 - *Protection of existing vegetation and natural resources, provision of open space, and*
 - *Installation of effective buffering and screening.*
- *The City shall require infill development to incorporate features that make it compatible with existing neighborhoods.*
- *The City's land use program shall provide development opportunities to meet the needs of persons requiring specialized housing such as the aged and those requiring care for disabilities. The scale, design, intensity and operation of this kind of housing shall be compatible with other land uses and located in proximity to supportive community services and activities.*
- *The City's land use program shall be consistent with applicable state and federal laws pertaining to housing.*

Action Measures

The following relevant City Action Measures are designed to guide implementation of the City's Goal and Policies:

- *Provide for logical and aesthetic transitions in land use patterns between new development and existing residential lands.*
- *Encourage the use of site and building design considerations for housing development adjacent to differing land uses such as use of construction methods and building materials to reduce noise; visual screening and buffering, modulation of building bulk and scale, building placement and orientation, tree preservation, landscaping, lighting, etc.*
- *Encourage use of site planning and building design methods for residential developments proposed adjacent to major streets to enhance livability, such as appropriate setbacks, buffering and screening, noise mitigation, building orientation, landscaping etc.*

- *Reduce compatibility problems between different residential densities by utilizing methods such as buffering and screening, increased setbacks, landscaping and modulating building bulk and scale.*

The Goals, Policies and Action Measures listed above, as well as community input, will be considered while forming the multi-family vision. In 2007, the City created a new vision for Single-Family Attached dwellings in Chapter 10.413.1. This can also be used as a guide to inform the future vision for multi-family dwellings.

Opportunity: The City can produce a clear multi-family design vision that will ensure that Gresham is recognized as a community of attractive, high quality design where innovation and creativity are welcome.

Relevant Code Sections:

- Volume 2 Policies of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Chapter 10.600 Housing
- Volume 2 Policies of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Chapter 10.413.1 Design Standards for Single-Family Attached Dwellings
- Volume 3 of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Section 7.0201 Dwelling Structures Containing Two or More Units, Single-Family Attached Dwelling Units and for Elderly Housing



This photo was consistently identified as the type of multi-family housing that the City would like to see in the “Picturing the Future Visual Preference Survey.”

2. Multi-Family Goals, Policies, Principals and Action Measures

Issue Summary:

As discussed above, the City does not have clear Goals, Policies, Principals and Action Measures that are specific to multi-family development in Volume 2 of the GCDP. The City

Council has recognized the need to address multi-family housing design by including the project in the 2009 Council Work plan. Through a series of events with the public, the Design Commission and the professional design community, the need to establish Design Goals, Policies, Principals and Action Measures was identified.

The same public comments and the analysis discussion points noted in the Issue #1: Multi-Family Design Vision above are relevant to the creation of the Multi-Family Goals, Policies, Principals and Action Measures.

Opportunity: The City can produce Goals, Policies, Principals and Action Measures that help to facilitate high quality, multi-family development which will benefit the physical Gresham environment and aesthetic values of its residents. The following draft Goals, Policies, and Principals were identified by the Design Commission and by the professional design community in the Design Charrette.

GOAL

The City of Gresham will be recognized as a community of attractive, high-quality design where innovation and creativity are welcome.

POLICY

1. The City of Gresham will promote quality design for multi-family developments which benefit the physical environment and aesthetic values of Gresham residents.
2. Standards applicable to multi-family dwellings (attached dwellings on a single lot) shall provide measures of consistency and certainty to expedite the development review process for designers, developers and decision makers.

PRINCIPLES

Site Design

- **Site Layout**

Site buildings, in a manner, that promotes energy efficiency, a sense of community and stewardship of the surrounding built and natural environment.

Buildings, transportation facilitates and other amenities shall be sited in a manner that protects the City's natural resources such as trees, waterways and the existing topography. Building placement shall optimize solar access and promote energy conservation, thereby reducing the need for non-renewable sources of energy. Connections between buildings and the public realm shall be provided in order to encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation such as walking, biking and mass transit.

- **Transition**

Provide a recognizable transition between the public realm and the private residential realm.

Transition or change between uses can be accomplished by spacial separation, layering of landscaping, material changes or elevation differences.

Transitions add visual interest to the streetscape, create a sense of identity for the street and the residences, provide visual cues of changes from the public space to the private space, and generally enhance the appearance of the community.

- **Orientation to the Street System**

Orient new multi-family developments (attached dwellings on a single lot) to the street as a means of creating “eyes on the street” and encouraging interaction between neighbors and friends.

Street orientation provides a setting for social interaction, creates a sense of public safety, and enhances the livability of the community. Orientation of new multi-family dwellings can take the form of a single common door entry, individual door entries from each unit to a street facing sidewalk or common courtyard area.

- **Multi-Modal Activity**

Construct a residential environment that is comfortable for pedestrians and encourages transportation by other modes, especially bicycles.

Site plans shall be configured to enhance the pedestrian experience and to encourage alternate modes of transportation such as bicycles. Pedestrian walkways and pathways shall provide access to the public area as well as on-site access between buildings and amenities. The conflict between vehicular and pedestrian activity shall be minimized using techniques such as physical separation and buffering elements.

- **Safety**

Integrate the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) into multi-family developments in order to provide a safe and comfortable environment for people.

The creation of developments that consider crime prevention measures in their inception will benefit the community by discouraging rogue element activity. This can be accomplished through various techniques such as providing adequate on-site lighting and visibility for doorway entries.

- **Provide Context Sensitivity**

Consider context sensitivity when designing multi-family developments.

Context-sensitive redevelopment shall consider proximity to existing uses, surrounding building character, street widths and functions, open spaces, desired land uses and view corridors.

- **Open Space**

Provide a hierarchy of public and private open space for all residents of multi-family developments.

Each unit shall have access to public and private outdoor space such as a deck or patio so as to maintain feelings of individuality and home.

- **Landscaping**

Incorporate landscaping that softens the bulk and scale of multi-family developments and improves the appearance of the area.

The appropriate placement, specie selection and size of landscape plantings shall be instrumental in adding visual interest, color, and structure to a site. Vegetation shall also influence energy consumption of the site by utilizing the placement of trees to mitigate heat effect. Properly placed and selected planting materials can also contribute to the sustainability of a site by reducing irrigation needs, absorbing stormwater and reducing run-off and water system pollution.

Building and Architectural Design

- **Excellence in Design and Architectural Expression**

Create aesthetically pleasing architecture for multi-family developments that contributes to the sense of place in Gresham.

Each multi-family development shall be treated as a long-term addition to Gresham. Architectural design shall reflect an attractive aesthetic for the buildings, which will create visual interest and a sense of permanence and high quality.

- **Sustainable Architectural Standards**

Promote sustainable architectural design.

The combination of architecture and site design can directly determine its consumption of energy. Where possible, buildings shall be oriented to maximize desired light exposure so carbon generated sources of energy are minimized. Building materials shall be selected with consideration of the effect that the building will have on the energy demand once constructed. Multi-family architectural standards shall celebrate environmental stewardship by incorporating such elements as dual clean and grey water systems.

- **Variety of Multi-Family Housing Types**

Offer a vibrant mix of multi-family housing types.

A variety of housing types, including townhouses, condominiums, apartments, and multi-plex houses, shall be developed to support a diverse community that meets the needs of a broad range of ages, personalities and backgrounds.

- **Compatibility in Height, Bulk, Scale and Setbacks**

Incorporate compatibility between uses into the design process of multi-family developments.

Building height, bulk, scale and setbacks shall be created with consideration for the surrounding development pattern.

- **Materials**

Utilize building materials that are of the highest quality and permanence and that build a sense of richness and character for the City.

Incorporation of excellent primary and secondary materials helps to give the buildings a sense of richness and character. Building materials shall exhibit a sense of permanence, timelessness and quality that embellishes the built environment.

Relevant Code sections:

- Volume 2 Policies of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Chapter 10.600 Housing
- Volume 2 Policies of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Chapter 10.413.1 Design Standards for Single-Family Attached Dwellings
- Volume 3 of the Gresham Community Development Plan, Section 7.0201 Dwelling Structures Containing Two or More Units, Single-Family Attached Dwelling Units and for Elderly Housing

3. Site Design

Issue Summary:

The current multi-family regulations do address many issues relative to site design for multi-family development with effective Code regulations. The existing requirements need to be examined with regard to the following topics:

- A. Sustainable Design
- B. Impervious Surfacing
- C. Transitions
- D. Street Orientation
- E. Multi-Modal Access
- F. Crime Prevention
- G. Context Sensitivity
- H. Natural Open Spaces
- I. Man-Made Open Spaces
- J. Landscaping

A Multi-Family Housing Design Tour was conducted to view 14 housing developments constructed primarily since 2006 under the current Code regulations. The purpose of the tour was to examine which of the current multi-family Code regulations are working to produce quality developments and which are not. The findings were as follows:

- **Sustainable Design** - Developments should incorporate elements that promote an attractive, sustainable site which conserves energy, protects our natural resources and promotes a healthier environment for residents. Lush landscaping, if properly sited, is capable of accomplishing some of the sustainable goals and is critical to the overall appearance of the development.

- **Safe Design** - A safe and comfortable environment should be provided for all multi-family residents that includes developments with appropriate lighting, sight lines, surveillance opportunities and security.
- **Site Design** - Developments should prioritize land uses, orient the buildings to the street, and provide safe and comfortable transitions from the public to the private realm. Connections between uses should be considered, as should the separation of parking areas from the pedestrian realm. Usable open spaces that meet the needs of residents, especially families with children, and visitors should be incorporated into the site plan.

The Design Charrette activities further informed the needs within the Site Design category. These needs were identified as noted below:

- A. Sustainable Design. The need to promote energy efficiency and sustainable site design more effectively was identified. The consolidation of building placement, the preservation of additional trees and the natural topography, the preservation of open space and the promotion of LEED-ND Neighborhood Design were all identified as possible mechanisms to promote sustainability.
- B. Impervious Surfacing. The need to consider establishing a maximum percent of impervious surfacing per development in order to recharge our underground aquifers was discussed.
- C. Transitions. The need to create a transition between the public realm of the sidewalk/street and the private realm of the housing units was identified. Possible transition solutions include requiring special separation, landscaping, elevations change or material changes.
- D. Street Orientation. The need to consider the street class or traffic volume was discussed relative to the building placement and orientation. For example, a courtyard configuration without all the door entrances directly facing the street may be a solution to a multi-family building on a high traffic volume street.
- E. Multi-Modal Access. Parking lots in front of the unit entry doors were discussed as an issue because this site configuration degrades the ability for people to move between units comfortably. Requiring car parking to be tucked behind the buildings or physically separated from the pedestrian spaces was discussed as a possible solution.
- F. Crime Prevention. The current regulations do have some safety standards that help to promote “eyes on the street.” Reviewing and incorporating the appropriate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Standards (CPTED) could create developments that provide greater safety for people. The CPTED strategies¹ are as follows:

¹ <http://www.cpted-watch.com>, accessed June 25, 2009

- Natural access control: Decrease crime opportunity by denying access to crime targets and creating a perception of risk for offenders. Indicate public routes and discourage access to private areas with structural elements.
- Natural surveillance: Provide observable entries (such as doors and windows that look out on to streets) and parking areas; pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets; and front porches to discourage intruders.
- Territorial reinforcement: Create a sphere of ownership so users develop a sense of territorial control while potential intruders, perceiving this control, are discouraged. The definition of transitions from public space to private space with landscape plantings, pavement designs, gateway treatments, and fences reinforce a sense of territory.

- G. Context Sensitivity. The issue of context sensitivity was identified both for the existing development and the proposed development. The need to balance the needs of both through adequate buffers, transitions and building designs was identified. The buffer area is the horizontal distance adjacent to the property line that includes vertical elements such as berms, plants, fences or walls. The buffers will be looked at in conjunction with the Residential District Review-Compatibility project. The buffer requirements currently specify a horizontal distance and whether landscaping or fences/walls are required. The size of the buffer, the amount of landscaping, and the character of the wall or fence depends on the proposed use and what existing use is on the abutting property. The Code provides an alternative buffer option which requires that the alternative afford the same degree of desired buffering and that the buffering will make up for the lack of horizontal distance. The provision of specific criteria would help mitigate compatibility issues.
- H. Natural Open Spaces. The Code does have a provision for Planned Developments but this has not been utilized very frequently by the development community. Providing incentives to preserve additional natural features and open spaces and consolidating building placement is a possible solution.
- I. Man-Made Open Spaces. The Multi-Family Tour illustrated that man-made open spaces are being provided for multi-family development but that the Code is not requiring that the placement of these open spaces be centrally accessible to the residents. Children's play areas in particular were found to be non-functioning play lots. The provision of requirements to require a central location for the open spaces and a building configuration that encourages neighborhood interaction is a possible answer.
- J. Landscaping. The landscaping requirements are not creating lush, attractive landscapes that enhance the development and soften the bulk and scale of the developments. Requiring that the landscape plan be drawn by a registered Landscape Architect and increasing the size and quantities requirements of plant materials are possible ideas to address the issue.



This multi-family photo represents very dense unit placement with common open space that was well-received in the Multi-Family Design Charrette.

Opportunity: The City can produce a set of regulations and incentives that promote development which is friendly to both the environment and to people.

Relevant Code sections:

- Setback requirements for all land-use districts that permit multi-family developments
- 4.1564(H), Impervious Surface Coverage (Springwater)
- 6.0300, Planned Developments
- 7.0201, Design Review, Dwelling Structures Containing Two or More Units, Single-family Attached Dwelling Units and for Elderly Housing
- CPTED standards
- 9.0100 Buffering and Screening Requirements
- Landscape standards
- LEED-ND Standards

4. Building Design

Issue Summary:

The current multi-family regulations do address some issues relative to building design for multi-family development with effective Code regulations. The existing requirements need to be examined with regard to the following topics:

- A. Design Excellence and Architectural Expression
- B. Sustainable Architectural Design
- C. Housing Type Variety
- D. Compatibility Between Uses
- E. High Quality Materials

The Multi-Family Design Tour helped define what provisions of the current multi-family Code are working to produce high quality developments and which are not. The findings were as follows:

- **Building and Architectural Design** - Building and architectural design excellence should be incorporated into all developments. Both large-scale and small-scale architectural elements should be incorporated into buildings that project appropriate building massing, that create visually interesting facades, and that respect the adjacent residential development. Architectural elements that enhance the building appearance should be incorporated. Materials and colors should be of the highest quality and exhibit a sense of permanence, timelessness and beauty.

The Design Charrettes were most instrumental in identifying the Building and Architectural Design category needs. The Building Site Design category needs were identified as noted below:

- A. Design Excellence and Architectural Expression. One of the most pressing needs identified was the facilitation of design excellence in the built environment. Creating a 2-track system of Guideline and Standard regulations and requiring that all development proposals that follow the Guidelines process gain approval from the Design Commission is one mechanism to address this need. Code provisions that address architectural elements such as building and façade design, and roof, window, garage and entry configurations could also contribute to design excellence and architectural expression.
- B. Sustainable Architectural Design. Just as with site design, architectural sustainability is important to Gresham residents. Creating incentives for complying with LEED and/or Energy Star standards for multi-family developments is one possible solution to the promotion of sustainable architectural design.
- C. Housing Type Variety. One of the most interesting issues that came out of the tour and the charrette was the monotony of the multi-family “apartment” style in Gresham. On the tour, traditionally styled, two-level multi-plex housing that appears as a large, single family home was not found in Gresham. The issue appears to be one of educating the development community to think creatively about housing configurations and modifying Code to facilitate various housing types.
- D. Compatibility Between Uses. The issues of height, bulk, and scale transitions between uses need to be examined in greater detail and addressed.
- E. High Quality Materials. The desire to utilize building materials that are of the highest quality design and durability was expressed. For example, items such as whether to require or incent the use of stone and brick in buildings will be investigated.

Opportunity: The City can produce a set of regulations and incentives that facilitates the creation of the highest quality building design and helps to create a sense of place for Gresham.

Relevant Code sections:

- Height requirements for all land-use districts that permit multi-family developments
- 7.0201, Design Review, Dwelling Structures Containing Two or More Units, Single-family Attached Dwelling Units and for Elderly Housing
- CPTED standards
- LEED standards